



CHAPTER XVI.

Despite his resolution to appear brave, Kedge uttered a terrible cry.

"It's a lie! It's a lie! I know nothing about John Oakburn's murder!" he said.

Paxton answered calmly.

"We know where you were every moment on the night of the murder, and look here!"

Thus speaking, the detective suddenly drew from his pocket the coin-bag which he had found in the closet of Kedge's apartment.

"Do you recognize this, Levi?" he asked, holding the bag up for Kedge's inspection.

The prisoner's knees shook, and there was an awful expression of terror on his evil face.

"Ah, I see you do recognize this money-bag. Shall I tell you where it came from? It was in John Oakburn's little private safe until the night before his murder. Since Oakburn's murder I found this coin-bag in your room. You see, Levi, denial is useless. The proof is overwhelming."

"You jeering devil!" cried Kedge, suddenly leaping up from the couch on the side of which he had been seated.

It seemed that in the agony and madness of the moment he was about to attack the detective.

Paxton did not recoil, but his glittering, steady eyes met the prisoner's blazing orbs, and involuntarily Kedge sank back cowed by the power of the detective's gaze.

"Look here, Paxton," he said presently, with a desperate effort at calmness. "You have me in a tight place. I'll admit, but I didn't kill Oakburn. I swear I didn't; I'll take my oath I'm innocent, even on the gallows."

To the detective's mind there returned the memory of the conversation he had overheard between Judith and the janitor, when the former said she believed Levi had nothing to fear in consequence of Oakburn's murder, because he was not guilty.

The detective thought Judith was sincere in thinking thus, but the janitor's flight and all Paxton's clues seemed to indicate the fellow's connection with the crime.

"It is folly for you to thus protest your innocence. Your only hope is in a confession," Paxton said.

"I tell you, once and for all, I have not John Oakburn's blood on my hands," replied the janitor, again repeating his denial.

"Then it is useless to waste time with you; the law must take its course. But, by the way, Levi, where did you get the ten thousand dollars you thought of investing in Newburgh real estate?" asked Paxton.

The janitor's jaw fell. He tried to speak, but only an inarticulate sound emanated from his lips. He was momentarily stricken dumb, it seemed, by this sudden revelation that the detective knew what he must have regarded as a profound secret.

Paxton saw the impression he had made, and he followed it up.

"You little dream how well informed I am regarding your private affairs, Levi," he said.

"I don't know what you mean. I am a poor man. I never had any money," answered Kedge, at last.

"I know all about that. But tell me, what have you done with Marion Oakburn?"

"I know nothing about the girl. How should I?"

"Look here, Levi, your lies are wasted. I am the man who attempted to rescue Marion Oakburn from Malvin's Hotel. Now, mark my words, you infernal scoundrel, if that poor girl is harmed in any way, I shall exact a fearful retribution."

Levi shuddered, but he protested his entire ignorance regarding Marion's whereabouts.

Paxton could not prolong this interview further, and he believed he had made an impression on the mind of the wretch which would result as he desired.

The detective counted upon Kedge's sending for his sister Judith, and imploring her to save him by the revelation which we know she had informed him she could make.

When Kedge found himself alone, after Paxton's departure, he gave vent to his thoughts in these words:

"If Judith fails me, it is either hanging or a long term of imprisonment. But I can save myself from the gallows if it comes to that, I think, at the cost of a confession which will surely condemn me for years."

What was the meaning of this? Could it be that there was some secret of this dark mystery which no man suspected looked in the heart of Levi Kedge?

Half an hour later, as the guard passed his cell, Levi Kedge called to him through the grating of his cell door.

"What's the row?" demanded the prison guard, rudely.

"I want to send a message to my sister. I'll pay you to deliver it," answered the prisoner.

"All right," said the guard.

Just then voices, and the sound of several persons' footsteps were heard, and Levi recognized the voice of Judith, who was one of the party.

"My sister is coming, and so I will not trouble you to take a note," said Levi, and the guard moved on muttering at the loss of a fee.

Judith had come to visit her brother, and a turnkey who was escorting the party of visitors of which she was a member, admitted her to Levi's cell, and brother and sister were left alone.

"Oh, my affectionate brother; you can be friendly enough when you are in trouble, can't you. I knew you'd be captured when you left Oakburn's last night," she said.

"What do you mean? I have not called at Oakburn's since I fled!" said Levi in amazement.

An exclamation ensued, and great was

Judith's wrath when she understood how the detective had deceived her.

"But to business!" cried Levi, interrupting her as she was heaping maledictions on Paxton's devoted head. "I am in deadly peril. I am accused of John Oakburn's murder, and the detective has a terrible array of circumstantial evidence to bring against me."

"What is his evidence?"

Kedge enumerated the points Paxton had mentioned in support of his accusation with two exceptions. He omitted to mention the coin-bag which had been found in his apartment, and the ten thousand dollars.

"I am in mortal dread. This evidence will hang me, I fear, unless you can save me. You said you could. You told me you could name the assassin. Will you do so? Will you save me, Judith?"

In conclusion, Levi said, earnestly.

"Yes; I mean to get you out of this difficulty."

"I'll not forget you if you do."

"The time has come when I must reveal who the guilty one is," said Judith.

She continued to converse for some time, but when Judith finally left him Levi was more reassured and hopeful.

"Judith really believes she knows the assassin. She will save me. But she does not even suspect the truth," muttered Kedge, when he was alone.

That very morning Paxton had caused the city to be flooded with notices offering a reward for any information as to the whereabouts of Marion Oakburn.

When Judith left Levi's cell and took her departure from the prison she saw and read with seeming interest one of Paxton's reward notices.

Judith had resolved not to delay in making the revelation which she believed would result in exculpating her brother, and she proceeded directly to Paxton's office.

At the detective's office Paxton himself, Stanmore and Stuart Harland were in council when Judith Kedge appeared.

At the sight of the janitor's sister Paxton anticipated the motive of her visit, and he felt an exultant thrill traverse his nerves.

"I am Judith Kedge, as you doubtless know, and I have something important to tell about John Oakburn's murder," said the woman, abruptly.

"We shall be glad to receive any information," replied Paxton, calmly.

Stuart Harland was very much excited, and Stanmore showed his emotion.

"I have always been devoted to Marion Oakburn, and I have loved her and served her faithfully for many years. For her dear sake I would cheerfully make any personal sacrifice," began Judith.

"You loved her so well you even consented to take care of all her money for her," Paxton commented, eagerly.

Judith looked frightened, for she had not suspected Paxton had the knowledge his words implied.

She did not resume her statement until Paxton said:

"If you know anything to help your brother's cause, or to explain the murder mystery, do not delay in making it known. I assure you Levi's neck is in danger."

Then Judith continued:

"When I love Marion, when it comes to choose between her and my own flesh and blood, nature rules. Had not Levi been wrongfully arrested, and did not circumstances unjustly awaken a suspicion against him, I would not now betray my dear Marion."

"What do you mean, woman?" thundered Stanmore.

"Patience! patience!" admonished Paxton.

Judith Kedge did not heed Stanmore's excited words.

She continued calmly:

"To shield Marion Oakburn, I have kept a terrible secret. To save my own brother I will confess it. She paused, and there was a moment of breathless silence.

Stuart was on his feet, and he seemed to await the woman's next words with such anxiety as only one in his situation could feel. He thought her revelation might be his own vindication.

"How shall I say it? I know who killed John Oakburn," Judith went on.

"Who is the assassin? The name! the name!" demanded Paxton, eagerly.

"Marion Oakburn! She killed her own father," said the woman.

Stanmore sprang to his feet, and scarcely knowing what he did in the excitement of the moment he seized Judith by the arm, as he hissed:

"It's a lie! an infamous lie!"

"You are a brave man to insult a woman," retorted Judith; Stanmore's face flushed, and realizing his conduct he released her.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Mr. Stanmore, you forget yourself," said Paxton, and then to Judith Kedge:

"Go on, give us the proof of this incredible accusation of yours."

"I will tell you all," replied the woman. "On the night of the murder I was ill, and I left my room at about 1 o'clock and went to Marion's room to procure some medicine. To my surprise Marion was not in her room. I heard a sound below, and looking over the rail at the head of the stairs I saw Marion come out of the office with a pistol in one hand and a sheet of paper covered with writing in the other. I watched her and saw her steal up the stairs and enter her room where she concealed the pistol in the bottom of her trunk, and it is there now."

"After that she came to my room, and with pretended anxiety about her father induced me to go down to the office, where we found the old man dead. Now you know why I think Marion Oakburn is guilty."

Thus concluded Judith Kedge.

"It is all a clever invention, no doubt, and if there is a pistol in Marion Oakburn's trunk I suspect you put it there," said Paxton.

"This is no more than I might have anticipated," answered Judith, with an injured air.

While she was making her revelation, Stuart Harland was intensely agitated.

Thus far he had kept the secret that he had seen Marion leave the office on the night of the murder, but now since the truth was revealed by the janitor's sister he felt that it was his duty to relate what he knew.

"One moment, Mr. Paxton, I believe you are too hasty. I, too, have concealed a certain item of knowledge regarding this crime, because I did not wish to bring suspicion and disgrace upon one whom I believe to be innocent, despite the evidence of my own sight, from my knowledge of her character," said Stuart Harland.

"This is becoming interesting," said Paxton.

"Do you confirm this woman's story?" demanded Stanmore.

"Listen, sir," answered Stuart, and then he went on to relate how on the night of the murder, as he was leaving the house just after the crime must have been committed, he saw Marion step out of the office with a paper in one hand, and something from which the light glinted as though it might have been reflected from a polished metallic surface in the other.

He also told how frightened Marion looked, and how she had fled up the rear stairs.

In conclusion he said:

"After all, I have so much confidence in Marion, as I have said, that I believe there is some explanation of her conduct yet to be made which will leave us all without doubt of her innocence."

As Stanmore listened to Stuart Harland's story he uttered a groan and buried his face in his hands.

Both Stuart and Paxton regarded him wonderingly, and they asked themselves:

"What is Marion Oakburn to Mr. Stanmore?"

As Stuart concluded, Stanmore arose and he looked as though the room was stifling him, as though he could not breathe, and he went out reeling like a drunken man.

"Have I done right in telling all this?" asked Stuart of Paxton.

"You have. Justice demands that all possible light should be cast upon this case," answered the detective.

Judith Kedge seemed delighted at Stuart's unexpected confirmation of her statement.

"Now you will believe me!" she cried.

"Yes, we believe your statement that you saw Marion Oakburn as described, but we do not yet admit her guilt as proven," answered Paxton.

"If more evidence is wanted, it is furnished by her flight. She ran away because she became alarmed and feared she would be arrested," continued Judith.

"And so you are guilty of compounding a felony, Miss Judith," said Paxton suddenly.

"I don't comprehend."

"I presume not. Let me refresh your memory. Marion Oakburn bribed you to keep it a secret that you saw her leave the office on the night of the murder."

"Not Not!"

"I know it is true. You wrung the last dollar she possessed from that poor girl, and I also suspect you compelled her to give you her jewelry."

"It is false."

"We have a faculty for making discoveries. I know all about your bank account, and I have seen Marion Oakburn's locket which was pawned by you."

"I deny it."

"It will do you no good to deny what we can prove. It is a criminal offense to compound a felony, or in other words to conceal a crime. If you expect any mercy at my hands, truthfully answer my questions. Do you know where Levi was at the time of the murder?"

"No, sir," answered Judith.

"Do you know where Marion Oakburn is?"

"No."

Paxton reflected for a moment in this wise:

"Since she has a powerful motive in seeking to place the crime on some one besides her brother, were it not that Stuart Harland has confirmed her story, I should not credit it. And yet if Marion Oakburn is innocent, why did she bribe Judith to keep her secret?"

Presently he said to Judith:

"We will accompany you home. I want to see the pistol you say is concealed in Marion Oakburn's trunk."

Judith assented.

As they were leaving the office, Stanmore re-entered, and being informed of their contemplated visit to Oakburn's apartment, he accompanied them.

Upon their arrival at the house, Judith led the way directly to Marion's room, and the others followed her.

Entering Marion's apartment, Judith said, pointing to a trunk:

"Search for yourselves."

The trunk was locked, but Paxton forced the lid, and in a moment he discovered a strange-looking pistol of large caliber at the bottom of the trunk.

It was indeed the very weapon that Marion Oakburn concealed there on the night of the murder.

Eagerly Paxton examined it.

"It is an air pistol," he said in a moment.

Then producing the large peculiar shaped bullet which had caused John Oakburn's death he added:

"Now for the supreme test. If this is the pistol from which the shot that killed Oakburn was discharged, this bullet will fit it."

Then he tried the bullet in the pistol. There was no longer a doubt.

The bullet fitted the pistol perfectly.

"We have found the weapon with which Oakburn was killed," said Paxton, now fully convinced on this point.

"I told you so," said Judith, triumphantly.

The near sighted old man and his wife alone attended to the wants of their customers.

The detective made the small purchase which was the reason for his call, and in payment for the same he was obliged to tender a twenty-dollar note.

In change, besides some smaller ones, he received a ten-dollar greenback.

Paxton was folding the bank note to place it in his pocket-book, when he made a discovery that was a complete surprise. He saw the bill was marked precisely like the money which had disappeared from Garrison's office on the night of the murder.

Paxton concealed the excitement this discovery naturally occasioned him, and, by dint of skillful inquiries, he succeeded in eliciting the information that the marked bank note had been received from Marion Oakburn, who frequently made purchases at the little shop.

"How is it that you are able to say positively from whom you received this particular note?" asked the detective, when the little old shop-keeper had told him he had it from Marion.

"Because when I received it I gave it to my wife, and this morning I borrowed it back from her. She will tell you the same. Is it not so, Sarah?" answered the little old man.

Thus appealed to the aged shopkeeper's wife at once confirmed her husband.

Paxton left the shop with his mind burdened with this new source of perplexity.

"The case grows stronger and stronger against Marion. When shall I get at the real truth of the affair—when shall I know who murdered the old cashier?" he said in monologue.

Paxton was seated in his office that same night when a messenger boy called and delivered a note, which the detective hastily read and as he perused it he seemed to be somewhat excited.

"This matter must be looked to at once!" he exclaimed, and he hurriedly left the office.

Paxton went directly to Judith Kedge, whom he found at the apartments lately tenanted by John Oakburn and his daughter.

He had received a surprising communication from the woman, but he suspected a plot, and he was on his guard.

The detective was about to hear a disclosure which he most desired, and Judith Kedge had resolved upon a bold move. A crisis was impending.

ATHLETIC MAIDENS.

A snow-shoe competition for ladies was lately held by the Christiania Snow-Shoe Club. The interesting event took place on a hill which not many years ago was considered a very difficult one for men, but the fair snow-shoe runners did wonderfully well. They not only compassed the descent without staves or poles but even insisted upon a hop being added. The request was complied with, and they had not, as it turned out, overvalued their powers in this respect, the hop was cleared in the best style. Three prizes were awarded, and a dance brought the day to a close.

Russian Restriction.

In Russia a child 10 years of age cannot go away from home to school without a passport. Servants and peasants cannot go away from where they live without a passport. A gentleman residing at St. Petersburg or Moscow cannot receive the visit of a friend who remains many hours without notifying the police of his arrival, as the case may be. The porters of all houses are compelled to make returns of the arrival and departure of strangers. And for every one of the above passports a charge is made of some kind.

The Coming Fruit Country.

Oregon fruit-growers say that Oregon is to be the greatest fruit-growing State of the Union. One fruit expert says that Italian prunes grown in the Willamette Valley are superior to those grown in Italy.

The climate, he says, is like the great fruit region of Asia Minor. One grower has planted about 15,000 prune trees in 150 acres in the Willamette, and it is said that prunes and other fruits are being planted in thousands of other farms. That part of the State promises to be a vast fruit orchard in the near future.

Improving Honey.

Honey could be immensely improved by the planting of the flowers known to yield a fine flavored nectar. Everyone knows the difference in the quality of the comb contents in different parts of the same country and in different regions. The Narbonne honey obtains its fine flavor by being harvested chiefly from labiate plants, such as rosemary, etc., and though it appears that the Maltese honey does not, as is often stated, owe its fine aroma to orange blossoms, the latter undeniably perfumes Greek honey.

Must Be a Springer.

In Singapore the bridegroom must secure his bride in a race, and this custom of bride-chasing is quite common throughout southern and eastern Asia. In Singapore a circular course is marked out, half of which is traversed by the maiden—incurable only with a waistband—ere the word is given for the would-be possessor to go in pursuit, in the hope of overtaking her before she has thrice compassed the circle; that achieved, she has no choice but to take the victor for her lord.

Glass Is Ancient.

Dr. Schliemann found bits of glass in his excavations at Mycenae, though Homer does not mention it as a substance known in his time. The most eminent Egyptologists place the date of the first use of glass at a period too remote to be given in years.

An Old Woman.

Letitia Cox, who died at Bybrook, Jamaica, in 1838, claimed and brought evidence to prove that she was 160 years old at the time of her death.

Patents.

Three-quarters of the entire manufacturing capital of the United States, or \$6,000,000,000, is directly or indirectly based upon patents.

SCOOPED ALL ITS RIVALS.

How a Leak Was Stopped in a Country Telephone Office.

"Maybe you fellows think there is no journalism outside of the great cities," said the new reporter, who had just come from one of the small cities of the central part of the State.

"But you're wrong. In the town where I lived last we used to have journalism enough to run a college school of the profession. Why, there were less than 20,000 people in the place and yet we had five dailies, three of them morning papers. Wasn't that journalism? To be sure the best paper depended rather on who had the best 'stand-in' with the night policemen—six of them in the town—than on any newspaper instinct, but the work had to be all done, and each office had a regular 'Poo Bah' who did it all."

Two of the morning papers were old timers, one independent and the other Democratic, and I was playing Poo Bah that season for the latter. All was not pleasant between us and our loathsome contemporary, and when the Republican party leaders started a third, with imported talent to run it, the plot thickened. We were in all things friendly with the new sheet and both were down on the independent brothers. The organs of the Democracy and Republicanism used to swap news at all times and devoted their columns to mutual efforts to 'scoop' the other people.

"It became a habit to exchange late news by telephone, but time after time some hint of our expected item would reach the Morning Mugwump and they would have the story as fully as did we. At last we made up our minds that the central office of the telephone company leaked the news, and this became a certainty when the reporter of the opposition paper was seen to escort to the theater the night telephone girl. We must prove it and have her official scalp."

"Coming in with a glare of trumpeted promise, the new daily, our Republican friend, was at that time taking a condensed telegraph service from Chicago, and the telegraph office was kept open solely for it, closing at about 2 a. m. when their work was ended. The other two of us supplied our readers with telegraph matter in stereotyped plates shipped from Chicago at 9 o'clock the previous evening and reaching us each morning at 3 o'clock. So we had no telegraphic communication with the outside world."

"One night at 2:30, according to previous arrangement, my friend who occupied a corresponding position on the Republican paper, called me up by telephone. I went to the 'phone and asked what was wanted. He said:

"I want to give you the biggest piece of news for an age. Blaine is dead!"

"Of course, I expressed horror and proper appreciation of the news feature, and he told me the story as arranged. It was at a night meeting of the cabinet on some crisis of state; Blaine and Harrison had first disagreed, then quarreled, and suddenly Blaine had been stricken with apoplexy, dying in the White House two hours later."

"Well, he repeated the story for me to take careful notes, said that they were giving it a 'scare' head in the first column, and gloated over the rage of our mugwump enemy when he would be surprised in the morning. I thanked him and we hung off."

"That morning I did not go to bed until the Daily Mugwump was on the street. I grabbed for a copy, and on the first page with a 'scare' head I saw the story just as it had been telephoned, in all its harrowing details. The plan had worked and the telephone girl must go. The two papers in league sent each a representative to the manager of the exchange with the story, the night girl was called up, and of course she had to confess."

"When that great piece of news went over the wire she knew it would not do to let her sweetheart be 'scooped,' so she had taken careful notes and immediately sent the matter in to the Mugwump. There was no way by which they could telegraph to obtain either a denial or a confirmation, so they had to risk it. The telephone girl was dismissed, two morning and two evening dailies devoted themselves to making life miserable for their mugwump contemporary, and the wires leaked no more when messages went back and forth between us and our friends, the enemy."

"Isn't that journalism?"

Evil Effects of Tobacco.

Chauncey M. Depew was once a slave to the use of tobacco, a habit learned in college, where many bad as well as good habits have been acquired. He wanted the strongest cigars, and a good many of them. It was twenty years before he would acknowledge the injury he was inflicting upon himself. One day, taking a cigar from his pocket with the view of lighting it, it suddenly occurred to him with great force that he was a slave of a very bad habit. He then recognized, as never before, that he was getting heavy-minded and dull intellectually, and that he coveted the effects of the nicotine more than he ever coveted political or professional honors. With these thoughts before him he said to himself, "This has gone far enough," at the same time throwing the cigar into the street, and from that day to this he has not smoked. Mr. Depew thinks if he had not stopped at the time he did the habit would have absolutely mastered him. To this may be added that there are more young men in college now who let tobacco alone than there were when Mr. Depew was a college student. The greater inter-

est in athletics has led to this. Experience shows that the devotee to tobacco cannot compete with the abstainer; he is less of a man. What does he go to college for? To become more of a man, and so he must abstain from those habits which defeat, to some extent, the very object of a college course.—Herald of Health.

One Hundred Thousand Lilies in One Field.

This is a sight to be seen only on the picturesque island of the Bermudas. There these flowers are raised as a regular field crop. In value and in the esteem of the inhabitants they come next to the potato, though both are less esteemed than the onion, which is the staple crop of the islands. No more beautiful sight can be imagined than at this season of the year greets the eye of the traveler as he comes suddenly upon one of these fields, hundreds of yards square, and a mass of most fragrant white.

Unfortunately, the lily fields are not in the most profitable state. The beautiful bloom represents to its owners waste, for the lilies should be marketed in the form of buds. They are cut from the stems and packed in cases, sixty-four in a box, sent by express all over the United States. If kept in a cool, dry place the buds will remain without opening for several weeks, while by being placed in water they can be brought to perfection in a day or two; or if the water is slightly warmed, in a few hours. This fortunate peculiarity of the lily has made it possible for it to be transported, notwithstanding the long journey. The culture was introduced only a few years ago upon the Bermuda by an American gentleman, Gen. Hastings. Some of the largest fields are still owned by this gentleman, and it is said that on one of them at any time in the season over 100,000 lilies may be seen in bloom at the same time.—Buffalo Express.

Origin of the Postage Stamp.

The postage stamp is so generally in use that it is difficult to realize that it is but half a century old, though as a matter of fact it is barely 50 years since this convenient article was introduced into the United States. The stamp is a little older in England, where, when first introduced, it